A regular meeting of the Pittsburg Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Ohlson at 7:03 P.M. on Wednesday, February 13, 2008, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 65 Civic Avenue, Pittsburg, California.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Diokno, Garcia, Harris, Kelley, Ramirez, Wegerbauer, Chairperson Ohlson

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Marc Grisham, City Attorney Ruth Ann Zeigler, City Clerk Alice Evenson, Assistant Planner Jason Burke, President Pittsburg Power Company Garret Evans, and Senior Civil Engineer Alfredo Hurtado

POSTING OF AGENDA:

The agenda was posted at City Hall on Friday, February 8, 2008.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

A.J. FARDELLA, Pittsburg, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

DELETIONS/WITHDRAWALS/CONTINUANCES: None

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

A.J. FARDELLA, Pittsburg, expressed concern with the fact that the Hillside Ordinance had not been brought back to the Planning Commission for approval. He reported that the City’s website had posted notification of the guidelines and the fact it would be addressed by the Commission on January 28, although that had not occurred. He questioned when the Commission would again address the issue.
Mr. Fardella reported that interested environmental agencies had been informing residents of the public hearings through flyers. He understood in speaking with the City Manager that an e-mail had been sent out clarifying when the issue would next be addressed by the Commission, although he had not received said information.

City Manager Marc Grisham reported that staff wanted to complete a thorough review of the environmental documents. The City Attorney’s Office had completed that review, affirmed by the City Attorney who was present, with the Commission expected to address the issue during its first meeting in March. Any out of date noticing on the City’s website would be updated. Interested agencies and members of the public would be re-noticed as well.

**PRESENTATIONS:** None

**CONSENT:**


**MOTION:**

Motion by Commissioner Garcia to adopt the Consent Calendar, as shown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ramirez and carried by the following vote:

- **Ayes:** Commissioners Diokno, Garcia, Harris, Kelley, Ramirez, Wegerbauer
- **Noes:** None
- **Abstain:** Chairperson Ohlson
- **Absent:** None

**PUBLIC HEARING:** None

**COMMISSION CONSIDERATIONS:**

**Item 1: Trans Bay Cable-Pittsburg Converter Station. AP-07-500 (DR)**

An application by John Dennett of Siemens requesting design review approval of architectural and site development plans to construct a 22,900 square foot single-story converter hall, a 3,750 square foot single-story operations building, 1,507 single-story spare parts building and associated electrical equipment and landscaping on a 5.6 acre site located from 610 to 570 West Tenth Street within the CS-O 1277 (Service Commercial with a Limited Overlay, Ordinance No. 06-1277) District; APNs 085-270-018, 085-270-019 and 085-270-025. *(Continued from January 23, 2008).*

Mr. Grisham reported that the item before the Commission had been continued from the
January 23, 2008, meeting to allow the staff planner to meet with the applicant to improve the design of the building. Also, the resolution of approval had not fully complied with mitigation measures and other items as required in the underlying documents. The project had a previously certified Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Assistant Planner Jason Burke presented the staff report dated February 13, 2008. He recommended that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. 9745, approving AP-07-500 (DR), as conditioned, with a requested modification to Design Review Condition 31, as follows:

31. (Mitigation Measures VIS-1a) prior to the issuance of a building permit, the final building plans shall indicate that the roof color shall be white (birch white) to complement the walls of the buildings and to ensure that the proposed project design complies with mitigation measure VIS-1a.

Commissioner Diokno spoke to Section 3. Decision of Resolution No. 9745, Condition 7, and requested clarification from staff on the Line of Sight Exhibit.

Mr. Burke clarified that the Line of Sight Exhibit had referred to safety regarding traffic exiting from the project site onto the street and the line of sight where the Traffic Department did not want to see any visual obstructions. He added that the document provided in the application had not reflected a one way in/out configuration, which the project had and which would have to be revised to reflect the current standards as shown in Condition 7.

Commissioner Diokno understood that the gates used to enter the project were located at the rear of the buildings with a wrought iron fence on the street side that would also be gated.

Mr. Burke clarified that the gate would be located 20 feet in to allow safety off of the road for vehicles. The gate would not be open during the day. The entire site would have restricted access.

Commissioner Wegerbauer stated that she had compared the differences between the initial and present submittals. She understood there would be two gates to allow emergency services in/out of the site.

Mr. Burke clarified that the Fire Department had reviewed the plans and would require standardized locks for access as reflected in the conditions of approval.

Commissioner Wegerbauer spoke to Page 4 of 9 of the February 13 staff report and the description of the sound wall. She understood that evergreen trees would not be planted along the frontage since there would be a sound wall around the site. Commissioner Wegerbauer suggested that if adjacent uses were to change in the future, trees should be planted now. She also clarified with staff that the current design would include awnings.
Mr. Burke explained that due to the configuration of the site and the placement of trees on the sides, there would be little space for trees close to the electrical equipment and there would be problems with overhang, among others. Perimeter landscaping was intended to screen the site from the public street although not particularly on the sides that would be screened by the 10-foot tall sound wall. He suggested the site would not require trees on the side as a result. When asked the highest point of visibility above the 10-foot tall sound wall, he noted it would be in the middle of the site where the converter station would be located and where arrester poles would intermittently be visible.

Chairperson Ohlson emphasized that he liked trees and was concerned that they would not be provided. Speaking to Section 3. Decision, Condition 4, he questioned whether or not the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had addressed global warming given that the site was close to the river/sea level. If the level were to increase over the life of the building, he questioned whether or not the buildings should be built higher than sea level.

Senior Civil Engineer Alfredo Hurtado advised that the condition referred to the existing watershed elevation, as approved by FEMA. He reported that he had attended a recent County meeting where the new FEMA maps had been reviewed. He anticipated that the new FEMA maps would be provided to the City by the end of the year. He was unaware any changes had been made to the FEMA floodplain in terms of global warming.

Mr. Grisham pointed out that the floodplain had been designed to address serious Sierra flooding. In the event of a reduced snow pack there would be fewer flooding impacts. Even if the sea level were to increase, there could be less water from the snow pack to create flood conditions.

As to Fire District Requirements, as shown on Page 6 of 12, Condition 11, Chairperson Ohlson clarified with Mr. Grisham that the facility would be identified as a significant homeland security facility. The site would be passing an extremely large amount of power to the City of San Francisco. For that reason, Pittsburg may be required to be low key. Other major power facilities had significant security restrictions and the same may occur for the subject facility.

PROONENT:

JOHN DENNETT, Construction Manager, Seimens, 1212 Mariner Way, 5, Tiburon, explained that his background was in general construction. He reported that he had been retained by Seimens to work on the project, having been involved in a larger project in Australia.

The subject proposal would involve a newer design, reducing the size of the entire facility. Much of the electrical equipment would be located indoors. The project would be significant and would provide 400 megawatts of power transferred from Pittsburg to San Francisco depending on demand on a daily or yearly basis.
Commissioner Ramirez affirmed with Mr. Dennett that Mr. Dennett had read and was in agreement with the conditions, as recommended, and as modified by staff. As to the revision to Condition 31, provided he had early notification, he had no problem changing the color of the roof.

CHARLES SMITH, Pittsburg, questioned whether or not the 400 megawatts to be transferred from Pittsburg to San Francisco would be the output for the entire day and how many people it would serve in San Francisco. He also questioned how the project would benefit the City.

Mr. Grisham explained that the facility would have the ability to provide 40 percent of the power for the City of San Francisco for one day. The system operation would also allow the ability to increase power, with a DC system, where the power load could be adjusted as the need increased in San Francisco. As to the benefits to the City, he advised that the Pittsburg Power Company would own the system and would see revenues of $1 to $2 million, which would increase over time, per year, for a very long term project.

OTONIO MONROY, 212 Lowry Court, Pittsburg, expressed concern with the project and questioned the benefits to the residents of Pittsburg. He commented that he had purchased his property two and a half years ago. His property was located in front of the site. He reported that he had been dealing with problems with noise and expressed concern that noise impacts would increase in the future. He currently viewed the site from the second level of his home and he questioned the height of the light poles inside the property and whether or not the lights would be contained within the property. He also inquired of the height of the trees to be planted.

Mr. Grisham advised that the poles would not be lighted, but would be part of the electrical system. There would be site lighting, which would be at a lower level. He pointed out there would be a 278-foot setback of the property from Tenth Street. The site would be heavily landscaped with trees along the 10-foot tall soundwall. He expected over time that views of the property would be of a large park along Tenth Street.

Mr. Grisham emphasized that the revenues from the project would go to the City and would be used for community services. He suggested that the site would be improved with the project as compared to the prior use of the site as a vehicle operation. Once construction had been completed, there would be no traffic in/out of the site since it would be completely remotely operated.

Mr. Burke clarified that there would be 20 to 40, 15-gallon box trees planted along the front of the site, primarily redwood and cedar trees with additional accent trees. Per the electrical plans, the front area would have 18-foot tall light poles, and within the rear of the facility, the light poles would be up to 30 feet tall. Based on the Mitigation and Monitoring
Reporting Plan, all light would be required to be directed downward to ensure no additional glare to adjacent properties.

Mr. Monroy expressed concern with the potential impacts to his property value as a result of the facility.

Mr. Grisham explained that the entire Tenth Street Corridor was being upgraded with the removal of two of the existing motels, which would enhance property values in the area. Also, in terms of potential impacts to property values, the City’s Redevelopment Agency would be continuing to work to improve the area from Railroad Avenue past the subject area, removing problem properties and people who had been causing problems. He reiterated that there would be little activity at the site.

Mr. Monroy reiterated that he hoped the facility would not affect property values in the area given the number of new homes that had been built. He went on to note that the work on the subject site had been occurring very early in the morning. Having spoken with staff, he had been informed that construction was to commence no earlier than 8:00 a.m.

Mr. Grisham advised that staff would review that situation and remind the construction workers of the requirements of the construction starting times.

Commissioner Wegerbauer offered her copy of the landscaping plan to Mr. Monroy.

Commissioner Ramirez inquired of the decibel levels from the equipment associated with the facility.

Mr. Burke explained that the potential noise impacts had been studied in the EIR. The source of most of the noise would be from the condensers behind the buildings, where the buildings would actually serve as noise attenuation blocking the sound from Tenth Street. With the addition of the sound wall and the buildings blocking the sound, the noise level would be brought down to a residential decibel level.

Mr. Grisham added that the original EIR had been based on a larger facility. He expected the noise levels to be less than originally modeled in the original EIR. Again, most of the equipment would be inside the facility. Everything would be done to ensure that the facility would not add to any neighborhood problems.

Mr. Smith clarified with staff the permitted residential decibel level.

Mr. Smith disagreed with the modeling scheme in terms of condensing that amount of noise in the facility when, before, there had been a larger area to disperse it. Mr. Smith understood that there would be a spare outdoor parts storage area and he questioned whether or not it would be for the storage of oil field capacitors and the like. Due to the existing floodplain in the area, if oil field capacitors were stored, there was no berm
protection being proposed. He added that the drainage was directed straight to the storm drain and then into the river.

Mr. Dennett explained that there would be nothing in the building to be a hazard from a fire perspective with no oil field equipment to be stored. The facility was a transmission facility, with no generators.

OPPONENTS: None

MOTION: AP-07-500 (DR)

Motion by Commissioner Garcia to adopt Resolution No. 9745, approving AP-07-500 (DR), the granting of Design Review approval of architectural, landscape and site development plans to construct a Major Utility facility on a 5.6-acre site located between 610 and 570 West Tenth Street (APNs 085-270-018, 085-270-019 and 085-270-025), for “Trans Bay Cable Converter Station, AP-07-500 (DR),” as conditioned and with Condition 31 amended to read as follows:

31. (Mitigation Measures VIS-1a) prior to the issuance of a building permit, the final building plans shall indicate that the roof color shall be white (birch white) to complement the walls of the buildings and to ensure that the proposed project design complies with mitigation measures VIS-1a.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ramirez and carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Diokno, Garcia, Harris, Kelley, Ramirez, Wegerbauer, Ohlson
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

The Commission acknowledged receipt of the following Notice of Intent (to review/ approve project at staff level):

1. ARB, Inc. Office Addition. AP-08-503 (DR).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:
Chairperson Ohlson reported that the TRANSPLAN Committee would next meet on
February 14.

Mr. Grisham reported that the Land Use Subcommittee would be meeting soon to address
the Specific Plan for the Railroad Avenue future eBART Station. He expected that a future
presentation would be made to the Planning Commission and the City Council. After that,
the program EIR for the draft project should then be initiated. The date of the subcommittee
meeting would be scheduled once staff had contacted the members of the subcommittee.
He added that a workshop had been scheduled for Tuesday, February 19 at 5:30 p.m.,
 prior to the City Council meeting, to allow a presentation from U.C. Berkeley students on
the Railroad Avenue Corridor.

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:

 Commissioner Diokno expressed concern with the current iteration for the Civic Center.
He would like to see that the spaces between the buildings not be neglected and relegated
to parking and streets. He would like to see the City hire or have a professional landscape
architect review the project plans to come up with recommendations to link the buildings so
that they would appear more like a Civic Center related to one another.

Mr. Grisham advised that with the exception of the tower element, City Hall and the court
house, the project was still at the idea stage. He noted that the City had no control over
the court system but had asked the courts to consider a design with sensitivity to
landscaping. The office building component would have some linkages. He commented
that many in the planning staff would like to see structured parking and a reduction of
surface parking, although the reality was that the economics did not support structured
parking due to the costs. He emphasized that all efforts would be taken with the project
design.

Mr. Grisham added that the ultimate uses in the Civic Center Master Plan were unknown
and would be driven by the market. He emphasized that the design was fluid at this time.
Chairperson Ohlson supported the inclusion of trees in the Civic Center project and Mr.
Grisham emphasized that trees would be included as much as possible.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m. to a Regular Meeting
scheduled on February 26, 2008, in the City Council Chambers at 65 Civic Avenue,
Pittsburg, CA.

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MARC S. GRISHAM, Secretary
Pittsburg Planning Commission